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CRITICAL NOTICES.

"THE RELIGION AND WORSHIP OF THE
SYNAGOGUE¹."

THE authors of this book are to be congratulated on their work. It is in many respects a great advance upon anything which has preceded it dealing with the same subject. That two sincere Christian clergymen should have produced such a book is an admirable sign of the times; it is evidence of the good fellowship and sympathy which, in some countries at least, can be found among people of different religions. The peculiar merits of the book make one proud of being an Englishman, whether one be an English Jew or an English Christian. For, within the limits of Europe, the book could only have been written in England. Such sympathy towards Rabbinic Judaism would be impossible elsewhere. In spite of a few more favourable signs in Germany during the last dozen years, no German Christian professor has ever written about Judaism as these two English Churchmen. Schürer's learning is colossal and superb; but at what a distance from Messrs. Oesterley and Box does his wonderful and magnificent work stand in real comprehension of the Other Man's religion, when that other man happens to be a Jew! The admirable words with which the Preface concludes are especially striking. I feel constrained to quote them in their entirety. They would be spoiled by curtailment. Most cordially do I reciprocate, from my own point of view, every sentiment which our authors express. German scholars please copy!

The writers rejoice in taking this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging their immense debt to Jewish scholarship and learning,—not only so, but they also feel it incumbent upon themselves to record how much good they have gained, both mentally and, they trust, spiritually, from their study of the religion of the Synagogue. They are convinced that Judaism and Christianity are mutually essential to each other, and that just as the two faiths are complementary and belong together, so the advocates of each can only be true to their respective faiths by extending the right hand of

¹ *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue, an Introduction to the Study of Judaism from the New Testament Period*, by W. O. E. OESTERLEY, B.D., and G. H. BOX, M.A. (London, Pitman, 1907; pp. xv, 443; 8 illustrations; price 10s. 6d. net).

fellowship to each other. The writers feel that they will not be misunderstood in saying this ; they recognize the fundamental differences between Judaism and Christianity, they know as well as most people the obstacles which stand in the way of union between Jew and Christian, they profess themselves to be definite and convinced Churchmen, but this does not preclude them from—it is rather the cause of their—respecting the convictions of those from whom they differ; nor does it prevent them from contributing, in however humble a way, their *quota* towards hastening the glorious consummation which will one day come about when all will be one.

The book before us is so good that one could wish it were even better. For one thing, it attempts too much, and covers within the short space of 426 large type pages a too enormous range. It is only natural, too, that the authors are better informed in some parts of their subject than in others, and that some portions of it are more sympathetic to them than others. Of this unevenness an example will be cited later on.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is called "Introductory," and deals mainly with the "Sources." Nevertheless, 134 pages are taken up by it, leaving only 292 for the two main sections "Dogmatic Judaism" and "Practical Religion." But of these "Dogmatic Judaism" only gets 130.

The authors have tried to be scrupulously fair and impartial. They have used all the authorities to their hand, though it is to be inferred that, like most Christian scholars who write about Judaism, they are not perfectly at home in the original Rabbinic texts. But they have sought to minimize this defect by diligent study of every available translation, and of the writings of the best Jewish scholars. For the first time the epoch-making articles and essays of Dr. Schechter are properly used and estimated. The authors, indeed, specially acknowledge their debt to him. I fancy that the works of Professor Bacher might have been cited more frequently. Yet in spite of diligent study one naturally misses a certain intimacy of knowledge. Judaism as a living religion can, in some respects, be better recognized and understood from Mr. Abrahams' tiny shilling text-book than from Messrs. Oesterley and Box. Their book shows, indeed, the appalling difficulty of writing about any religion. If you write about your own religion you cannot be properly impartial, if you write about another religion you cannot know it from within.

To our authors the main interest of Judaism is its relation to, or contrast with, Christianity. This is perfectly natural, but, when combined with a certain lack of the *intimacies* of knowledge, it mars the perspective. What is less important in the religion itself and to its adherents becomes more important, and even vice versa. Thus 27 pages are given up to "Intermediate agencies between man and

God." But it is safe to assert that in the ordinary stream of Judaism these "agencies" never possessed any special importance at all. For one Jew who had ever heard of Metatron there were always 999 who had not. So, too, a somewhat false stress is placed upon the idea or term of the *Shechinah*, "Those that sit together and are occupied in words of *Torah* have the *Shechinah* among them." Obviously the full Godhead is not among them. If we speak of God being "within" man or "among" men, we do not mean that the Godhead in its entirety is "within" or "among" them. So it is convenient to have another word to indicate the difference. We do mean something real, though we could not define it. So we say the *Shechinah* is there: it is a very convenient softening. But it does *not* mean *either* one of two things—(1) It does not mean any sort or kind or shade of mediation, which, in spite of any half-playful or wayward sayings, is foreign and abhorrent to the regular stream of Jewish religion. On this point orthodoxy and reform are entirely at one. (2) It does not mean that God is remote or "too great and holy" to be, in some real sense, "present among men."

More intimate knowledge from within might have enabled the authors to have put the stress more accurately. For instance, in the last chapter several rites are mentioned one after the other, some of which are still almost universally observed, some fairly frequently, while others (so far as Western Europe is concerned) are almost wholly obsolete. In our authors' book we should not gather much as to this difference in observance.

Altogether, the impression given by the book is that Judaism is a very mediaeval and queer sort of religion. Even the illustrations have an archaic, museum-like look about them. It is clearly this mediaeval and strictly orthodox religion that is sympathetic to our authors. But even orthodox Judaism is less mediaeval than might be supposed from Messrs. Oesterley and Box. It is less queer and odd. It is less "oriental," more possible for an ordinary man of the West to observe and to believe. As to our authors' complete lack of sympathy with Reform Judaism I shall say a word later on. One can see the reason for it. Orthodox Judaism might somehow pave the way to orthodox Christianity, liberal Judaism can never. In spite of our increased sympathy with the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels, and with a *strict* Unitarianism which is true to its name, we liberal Jews are really further from orthodox Christianity than orthodox Jews are. This may seem a paradoxical saying, but it is true, and our authors are perhaps, though unconsciously, aware of it; Unitarianism would perhaps hardly be Christianity to them, and liberal Judaism would perhaps hardly be Judaism.

It is pleasant to come back again for a time to praise and grateful recognition. On the very central question which is at issue between the German Protestant theologians and their unregarded Jewish critics our authors speak with no uncertain note. "The Law was by no means usually the burden which it has been supposed to be to pious Jews" (p. 135). (There follows a somewhat doubtful explanation of Paul's teaching in order to combine the preceding admission with a full adherence to the Pauline position.) Again (p. 344):

It is a mistake to suppose that the Sabbath-rest of the Jews is to them a rigorous and exacting observance, so austere in its demands as to kill out all joy and loveliness. On the contrary, it appeals to the real Jew as a divinely-given rest from the turmoil and bitter opposition of a hostile world. It is—and always has been among the Jews—essentially a festal observance. The more opposition and persecution have crystallized without, the more passionate has the attachment of the Jew become to what he regards as the most precious legacy of his national past.

It is true that like all Jewish observances its external setting has been rigorously fixed and defined by law, and as a consequence the institution of the Sabbath has been liable to the dangers that especially beset legalism—externalism and formalism. It is necessary, however, to guard against the mistake of refusing to recognize, beneath all the forbidding exterior of Rabbinical enactments about the thirty-nine kinds of work not permitted on the Sabbath, &c., the heart of passionate feeling and emotional tenderness that pulsates behind.

The authors are very emphatic in their statement about the position of the Home in Judaism (p. 267). They are very fair in their estimate of the "intellectual element in the Jewish religion," which they regard as the "strength and the weakness of Judaism" (p. 273). I think that we might take some legitimate exception to the statement that "Judaism has very little sympathy to offer to the unlearned, the ignorant, the weak, the fallen, the sinner" (*ibid.*). Most of us know many extremely ignorant persons at any rate who are passionate Jews! But as to "the fallen and the sinner" there is a certain truth in the statement. But the point is that this, where true, has been the fault of Jews and not of Judaism. For the God of mercy and forgiveness is a fundamental doctrine of Judaism, and there is no reason whatever why keen redeeming search and care for the sinner and the fallen should not form part of Jewish, as well as of Christian, activities. If we were rather wanting upon that side, the want is now being supplied.

Once more, the authors are very fair on the subject of divorce—indeed, some might think a little too lenient, and also on the general position of women. On the other hand, it is not accurate to say of

modern Judaism (p. 302) that "it does not attach nearly sufficient importance to the definite religious training" of women. *Modern Judaism* does, I think, attach very great importance to the religious education of girls. It is rather characteristic of our authors to be more just and even generous to the museum Judaism of the middle ages than to the living Judaism of to-day.

It is rather interesting to see how difficult it is for our authors to shake themselves free from the prevalent idea that to Judaism God is distant and inaccessible. They try to take up a position which shall do justice to *all* the facts. The Jews, they say, do justice only to some facts; the Christian theologians pay regard only to others. They will take account of *all*. They admit that "there is a very great deal in those (i. e. the post-biblical and Rabbinic) writings to show that the Christian representation of the case is only partial." The Christian theologians "have not always treated the subject in a way that a greater knowledge of the facts would have demanded." On the other hand, the Jewish theologians are at fault too. They "do not, as a rule, acknowledge sufficiently what may be called the 'extenuating circumstances' which have led Christian writers to lay undue stress on one side of the question. There is a very great deal in post-biblical and especially in Rabbinical, literature to justify what Christian theologians have written regarding the Jewish belief in God" (p. 158). After this we prick up our ears with keenest interest; now at length we may hope that we shall know the truth. It is a little disconcerting to find that this full and true representation of the "nature and attributes of God," which is "to present, as far as possible, all the elements for consideration," covers only four pages; but perhaps they may nevertheless be adequate. Let us see. First of all, we are told that "Judaism rightly teaches, in contradistinction to Pantheism, that while God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world and the fullness thereof, while he is in the world as being omnipresent, yet that God and the world are wholly distinct. According to one aspect of Jewish teaching on this subject, the belief in the absolute distinctness of God from the world was pushed to such extremes that his direct action and interference with the world of his own creation became to a great extent obscured, and his activity, so far as humanity was concerned, was said to be accomplished by means of intermediate agencies" (p. 159).

For the proof of the last tremendous and unqualified assertion there is a reference to chapter ix on "Intermediate Agencies between God and Man," of which it may be safely said that, so far as Rabbinic Judaism is concerned, the few references to Metatron by no means prove, or go anywhere near proving, the assertion. For

one allusion to Metatron or to the Memra as being an intermediate agency of the kind required, there are five hundred which give that position to God himself, and the remark that "in post-biblical Jewish theology there is little to show that God Almighty *personally* directs the course of the world's history" (p. 183), is unwarranted and untenable. Then it is affirmed that the teaching referred to in the quotation from p. 158 "owed its origin to the Jewish conception of God's transcendent *Righteousness* and *Holiness*" (p. 160). It is easy to give passages from the apocryphal and apocalyptic literature to prove the stress laid upon these two qualities, but no proof whatever is alleged for the following assertion: "One, therefore, so pure and holy and majestic, could not fittingly be thought of as having direct intercourse with man" (p. 160). "No proof whatever" is perhaps too strong, for the proof is our old friend that God's name was avoided, that Yahweh was not pronounced, and that paraphrases such as the "Blessed One," the "Merciful One," &c., were resorted to. These exceedingly meagre "considerations" are then said all to point "to the conception that God is far removed from men and the world of his creation, and that his holiness and majesty forbid conceiving of him as coming into direct contact with humanity" (p. 161). So far for the one side. Now comes the other. For what has preceded is "only half the truth." "There is another side." This other side is represented by a long quotation from Schechter, and in a final paragraph instances are given to show that the Rabbis "in their desire to emphasize the nearness of God to man, and his interest in all that concerned man, and in their eagerness to balance those transcendental conceptions of God already referred to," occasionally fell into "an extreme of the opposite kind, and said things about God which to our ears border on irreverence" (p. 162).

Now surely this is unsatisfying. One is entitled to ask which of these opposite conceptions was the prevailing and usual conception? Which, for instance, is the conception that pervades the liturgy? The authors have said that "especially in Rabbinical literature" there is a "very great deal" to justify the usual Christian representation of the Jewish conception of God. Well, Dr. Schechter's quotations on the other side are *all* from the *Rabbinical* literature. Ought we not, then, to have had some proof by quotation of the "very great deal" "especially in Rabbinical literature"? Is it not tolerably clear that "the very great deal" rests upon what our authors have read in Weber, Schürer, *et hoc genus omne*, and that it stands for the old view from which they cannot yet wholly shake themselves free? For the truth, I fancy, is that, as regards the apocalyptic and pseudo-epigraphical literature, the charge of the "remote" God is com-

paratively most true, as regards the Rabbinical literature, it is comparatively, or even absolutely, most false; so that "especially in Rabbinical literature" is just the most inaccurate part of a generally inaccurate assertion.

One wonders what a book on Judaism would be like written by some one who was quite as much removed in ancestry and belief from Christianity as from Judaism. It is legitimate enough that our authors should look at each side of Jewish doctrine or practice from a Christian point of view, but, as I have already said, the total impression is somewhat injured by this procedure. For instance, in the chapter on Baptism, its use in present-day orthodox Judaism is hardly referred to at all; all the space is given up to the question how far the "ritual washings" in early Israel were "sacramental." It would, I think, be held by most scholars that the sacramental character of such rites as those spoken of in Lev. xiv and xv and Num. viii is rather exaggerated. However, be that as it may, it needs bringing out that modern Judaism glories in the absence of sacraments. We have quite shed the belief, if we ever had it, that "through material means spiritual grace is conferred" (p. 257). We may be right or wrong in this, but our authors quite fail in bringing out, still more in doing justice to, the real Jewish point of view, whether orthodox or reform.

A point in which Messrs. Oesterley and Box seem to me unfair to *Rabbinical* Judaism is in connexion with the respective shares of God and man in human excellence and human "salvation."

In spite of the most laudable efforts to look at the Law with ordinary eyes and without Pauline prepossessions, the attempt does not wholly succeed. This is only natural. (I wonder where you could find two Jewish clergymen who would write so sympathetically, generously, and understandingly of Christianity as these two Christian clergymen write of Judaism.) The "mere fulfilling of legal requirements" is, no doubt, from one point of view, a true description of Rabbinic piety (p. 144). But it is untrue to its spirit. The Law—(and our authors have not sufficiently realized that *Torah* is not an absolute synonym for the Pentateuch, but a far wider term)—was, in a sense, a number of enactments, but it was also conceived to be the perfect will of the perfect God. The Law is taken at its own valuation: perfect, eternal, divine. You can never appreciate the Rabbinic position if you do not bear this in mind. The Rabbinic Jew is not simply seeking to fulfil "legal enactments"; he is seeking to do as God has told him. Our authors, though probably orthodox Christians, are imbued with criticism and its results. It is very hard for them, or for any modern and historical critic, to realize this

profound belief in the absolute perfection and divinity of a composite code like the Pentateuch, but this is what we have to do in order to understand the Rabbis, and to perceive how any criticism of the Law, or any doubt as to its accuracy (for instance, in its own assertion that to obey its orders was the way to life and salvation) was bound to run off them as water runs off a duck's back. Paul was doubtless a greater genius than any Rabbi of his age, but when the divine Law says that the Jews are justified by the Law, he, a mere man, could preach from morning to night that man was not justified by the Law, and the result for all Rabbinic Jews was a foregone conclusion. God was believed; man was disbelieved.

Again, the "mere fulfilling of legal requirements" sounds a poor thing, and desperately unspiritual. But the case is different when these legal requirements contain such rules as: "Be ye holy, for God is holy. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul. Thou shalt bear no grudge. Thou shalt not hate thy neighbour in thy heart," and a hundred similar "requirements." This moral side of the Law is insufficiently brought out by our authors. But it is very prominent in the Rabbinical literature.

Apart from this somewhat inadequate conception of the *Torah*, are our authors justified in the assertion that "the observance of the *Law* or *Torah* was purely a matter of the individual will" (p. 143), that "the attainment of salvation is a matter for man's unaided exertions"? (p. 142). Again, "it is taken for granted that man's act *ipso facto* results in the doing away of his sin" (p. 234); "Divine grace does not, *per se*, lead men to do what is right; repentance is brought about by man and by man alone" (p. 248). One sees the bearing of these strong assertions. They are intended to indicate the weakness of Judaism in one fundamental point. They are to point a contrast with Christian teaching. But I do not think they are accurate, and, oddly enough, it is in regard to Rabbinical Judaism that they are, as I fancy, least accurate of all. But our authors, for reasons which it would not be very far to seek, attempt to saddle Rabbinic Judaism especially with these particular doctrines. For after the passage which I have just quoted from p. 142 they go on to say: "this is certainly not the teaching of either biblical, apocryphal or pseudepigraphical literature, nor, as we shall see in a later section, would it fairly represent the teaching of present-day Judaism; but it does seem to be characteristic of Rabbinical teaching proper, at all events as crystallized in the Talmud and allied writings" (p. 142). Surely a wholly impartial scholarship would judge differently. It is rather the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings (Sirach, for instance,) which are rather arid and one-sided in this regard. The Rabbis were

indeed strong believers in free will. They did think that normal man was responsible, and could therefore justly be brought to account, for what he had done or failed to do. But they did not forget that in some mysterious way God helps man to be good, and that therefore it is legitimate to pray to him for this help to be given. The saying of Akiba is intensely characteristic. The Rabbis accepted both parts of a complex truth, and did not attempt to harmonize them by any theory. "Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given; and the world is judged by grace, yet all is according to the amount of the work." In the Prayer Book the real views of Rabbinic Judaism are best to be found. Here we find: "Lead us not into the power of sin. Subdue our inclination. Let not the evil inclination have sway over us." "Put it into our hearts to do in love all the words of thy Law." "Let our hearts cleave to thy Commandments." "Draw us near unto thy service, and bring us back in perfect repentance into thy presence." "Purify our hearts to serve thee in truth." "Open my heart to thy Law." These sentences come from old Rabbinic prayers which were already in constant use in the Rabbinic period. What would have been the conceivable meaning or good of them if Rabbinic Judaism had believed that God gave no help to man in doing good and in abandoning evil? Rabbinic Judaism seems, upon the whole, to have preserved the balance pretty evenly, and to have put a fair amount of stress upon God's side as well as upon man's side in the attainment of righteousness.

It would take too long to deal with the criticisms passed by our authors upon the Jewish doctrine of sin (chapter xii, pp. 229-54). Here again we see the curious results of judging a religion from a particular standard, and of estimating its excellences or defects according as it reaches or fails to reach that test. The authors, for example, speak of the "true nature of sin." But what does this mean? It simply means that particular kind of Christian teaching about sin which these two scholars happen to regard as true. However, according to this standard, in no non-Christian book is "the true nature of sin" so realized as in the fourth book of Esdras. Apparently, the "true nature of sin" involves the "innate badness of the human heart" and its "universal prevalence." (Jeremiah had said something of the sort, and so had other Jews before, but perhaps less dogmatically and sweepingly.) It also includes "original sin." It also denies that "repentance is the means of cleansing from sin." I must leave Mr. Morris Joseph to fight it out with our authors as regards what they call his "exceedingly illogical position" (p. 254). I think that if they had read more of his book, or read it more carefully, they would have found that he does not

hold that in the process of atonement or forgiveness God is a mere metaphor or cypher. But after all, God can be trusted to do his part and to take his share, and into the mystery of it we cannot fully penetrate. The great thing is that we men should do ours. Let us try as hard as we can to repent, to give up sin, to amend, and so on; we can be sure that if we do our part, *or even before*, God will do, or will have done, his. We can ask him to cause us to repent and we can try to repent ourselves, both in one. We need not seek to distinguish, so to speak, as to which comes first. This Jewish doctrine is very unsystematic, very undogmatic; it sometimes presses one side and sometimes another; but I am not sure that it is therefore necessarily either illogical or untrue.

It would have been better in every way if the authors had omitted the short and inadequate paragraph about "the Reform Jews." It is the least well-informed and the least sympathetic in the book. You can hardly say anything that is worth saying about a big religious movement in four large-type pages (pp. 130-4). The authors do not seem to have any acquaintance with the subject from within. They are also, I think, rather prejudiced. Even in the preliminary characteristic of the Jews, while very fair to the "East End Jew," who apparently is the only "genuine son of Abraham," they tell us that "self-assertiveness and love of ostentation" are "but too obvious" in the "fairly prosperous West End Jew" (p. 24). One would like to ask how many "fairly prosperous West End Jews" do the authors know and know well? Ten? Fifty? A hundred? The present writer knows more than even the last figure, and must emphatically deny the truth of the allegation. To return, however, to the paragraph about the Reform Jews. Are the authors sufficiently acquainted with them, in America, in England, and elsewhere, to assert that Reform Judaism is "painfully deficient in anything like religious warmth"? Even as regards English Reform there is not much first-hand knowledge from within, or we should scarcely have found Mr. Morris Joseph quoted as apparently accepting *for himself* the statement that "the Talmud is the final authority in Judaism" (p. 205); or again, we should not have met with the statement that the three years' Cycle is unknown to-day (p. 352, n. 2). A most unfortunate and unjustifiable use is made of a long quotation from an article in the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW. Doubtless the article was a trap for the outsider, or for those who do not know the peculiar and isolated position of its author. Into this trap Messrs. Oesterley and Box have been not unwilling to fall, and they then proceed to the assertion that "*this attitude is one of the characteristics of modern Judaism*" (p. 134). The

italics are their own. But to italicize an inaccuracy does not make it the more accurate. The relation of Reform Judaism to Modern Judaism is left vague. We are left wholly in the dark as to its content, aims, and spiritual and religious ideals. The only positive thing told about it is that "it is painfully deficient in anything like religious warmth." What the new methods are with which Reform seeks to stem "the tide of unbelief" we are not informed. Presumably the authors seem to know or care little about them. Not thus should an account of the Reform Movement be given to the world. A few quotations will not suffice.

But this paragraph is, after all, only a small blot upon an admirable book, for which all Jewish readers should be sincerely grateful. The fairness, sympathy, and industry of the authors deserve the highest praise.

C. G. MONTEFIORE.